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THE
LULL BEFORE DORKING.

BY
SIR BALDWIN LEIGHTON, BART.



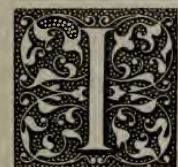
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1871.

“For example, you Bobus Higgins, sausage-maker on the great scale, who are raising such a clamour for this Aristocracy of Talent, what is it that you do in that big heart of yours, chiefly in very fact pay reverence to? Is it to talent, intrinsic manly worth of any kind, you unfortunate Bobus? The manliest man that you saw going in a ragged coat, did you ever reverence him? did you so much as know that he was a manly man at all, till his coat grew better? Talent! I understand you to be able to worship the fame of talent—the power, cash, celebrity or other success of talent; but the talent itself is a thing you never saw with eyes.”—CARLYLE’S *Past and Present*.



THE LULL BEFORE DORKING.



T has been said, truly or untruly, that a certain responsible minister of the Crown, upon reading the now famous "Battle of Dorking," declared that "Either he or the author deserved to be shot!" While these two are settling which it ought to be, and while Parliament is wasting precious hours in puerile and undignified palaver, it may be observed, that the only question that would occur to a practical mind like that of Moltke, on reading the aforesaid description, would be whether our volunteer battalions in their present unorganised and unprepared condition would have made any such stand at all against "Pickelhaube" veterans. Whether, in fact, under present circumstances, there would have been any other possible alternative to that described in the Blackwood article except to buy out the invader without a contest. And yet this may be unquestionably predicated of England at this moment, that in every natural and warlike resource, including money, the

sinews of war, she is superior to every other nation at present in existence. Here is a list of some :—

Artillery (including the power of producing it, factories, smiths, &c.) acknowledged by Continental officers to be man for man and gun for gun unrivalled.

Cavalry.—The first horse-producing and horse-man-producing country in the world ; (every hunting-field represents a troop of natural cavalry).

Infantry.—From Cressy to Inkerman never yet beaten by foreigners in any decisive engagement ; and both officers and men have, over and over again, fought at any odds and at every disadvantage.

Ships.—Avowedly the first naval power, and possessing the best sailors ; also by far the largest steam mercantile marine.

Arms and munitions of war, such as breechloaders, torpedoes, and coal,—the factory of the world.

Money and pecuniary credit.—Unquestionably the wealthiest nation, with the greatest power of taxation and credit.

Population, including India, the largest civilised empire in the world ; and it has yet to be shown that Indian levies, led by British officers, could not stand in line with British troops.

Natural School of Military Practice.—A vast territory, thousands of miles away, held by the sword, and by British troops.

Earthworks, Telegraphs, and Railroads.—English contractors and English navvies, that is, *both heads and hands*, have been sought to do this work over all the world, because they do it cheapest and best.

And what is the sum of all this? Simple chaos as regards the state of practical defence in England, and some twenty-five millions a year spent in producing chaos; with one gleam of better things in India, where we are not playing at soldiers, but holding with the sword one hundred and fifty millions of hostile foreigners at our peril. Some apparent efficiency in our fleet, but great uncertainty as to future modes of marine warfare, whether the broadside or the ram, the sea-goer or the floating battery, the big gun, or the torpedo is to decide these matters for us hereafter.

But some will ask, how comes all this about? Never was cause more palpable, or effect more consequent. For some years past we have been governed by the Plutocratic Philistine, whom a great writer has christened "Bobus." From Parliament to Vestry Bobus is king! Cash-nexus is his only rule and government! and Anarchy is his minister! A crass, selfish, and timorous Plutocracy, destitute of convictions or politics, incapable of greatness or of government, and careless of national honour that costs money, has so usurped the position and the power of the old Aristocracy,—has so fooled with "liberal sentiments" and Cant the new Democracy, that we have now come to this;—nothing but this—Anarchy plus Bobus!—or in case of actual invasion, it may be—Anarchy minus Bobus!

Such being the case, amid much doubt and uncertainty, caused by a revolution in the art of war, a strong and otherwise intelligent Government, having the bugbear of Bobus greatly before their eyes, con-

ceives the idea that, if it could but abolish a system which has never yet failed us in war, and which somehow (rudely enough maybe) provides a sort of aristocracy for the officering of our army, every thing will settle itself without further trouble or organization. Now Frederick the Great, the father of the Prussian system (which it seems the object of Mr. Cardwell in some ways to imitate), expressly provided that this aristocracy, this higher social status, should be maintained as an additional inducement to his officers to carry out fearlessly their duty under trying circumstances. He said, "There are or may be occasions in the life of every officer, when the slightest wavering may cost me the destruction of an army:—I will so make it that in addition to the loss of official rank and advancement, every officer that so fails me shall lose honour and social caste. I cannot do that with middle-class men, who will lose nothing among their equals whether they fail or not. My officers shall give me a material guarantee in pledge, their honour,—that to them shall be more than their life." Thus spoke Frederick the Great; and in effect this is so provided by the Prussian system, which maintains such aristocracy by a process of selection to a regiment not very dissimilar to our election to a club, and also by other means. But it would appear that the present Government has never heard of or never understood this necessity, else in abolishing purchase, they would surely think of providing a substitute.

But let all that pass now: it is not the main point.

Amidst all this chaos and doubt, army re-organization, abolition of purchase, &c., to a practical and perceptive mind like the aforesaid Moltke, there would be no uncertainty or doubt whatsoever about the matter. If it were necessary for him to come with his triple column upon Great Britain (and it is said that a huge canal is being cut through from Kiel which will make that port only forty-eight hours steam from Yarmouth, while Hamburg is already Prussianized) : if he could succeed in landing two, or even one, of his columns (and the fleet cannot be everywhere), he sees clearly enough that there is nothing, not even a torpedo or a fort, to prevent his marching upon London within a week. What will Bobus and Co. say then? He must be logical under such circumstances, and he is bound to get the country out of the difficulty he has brought it into. As a sensible and practical man, therefore, he might speak thus : "Sirs, we were not quite ready for you. We are not sure whether we ever intended to be prepared for such a magnificent arrival ; but we needn't fight. What will you take to go?"

This is the only logical consequence and result of the paltry policy, and puerile proposals of the Government; *and it were better said out now than written in blood hereafter.* To this condition are we clearly come. What are Englishmen prepared to say? What does the old Tory and the new Radical think? (Bobus has devoured the ancient Whig), but what is any practical man prepared to do?

Leaving Parliament discussing terms of compensation while they ought to be considering the best substitute for Purchase, and other greater matters, this is what might occur to such a one incensed with actualities, and unbiased by cant.

It is true we have no yet approved great general such as Marlborough or Wellington; there may be some in *posse*, but not yet in *esse*. We have, however, some three or four men at least, who have some practical ability in war—some indeed actually sitting (as yet almost dumb) in the great council of the nation. There is a man who once made Ireland safe by a system of military organization, and persuaded thereby sundry Fenian scarecrows, and American officers who had seen strategy, that invasion or rising would be madness. There is another, who marched up to Magdala in Africa, and in spite of all we could do to hamper him, succeeded with very small loss in doing all we wanted in about as complete a manner as we generally do anything. There is a general whom we have lately delighted to honour, who is said to have studied the Prussian system on the spot, and to regard with some contempt our amateur organizations. There is yet another commander, a man of singular modesty, for whom lately scarce any press epithet was too severe, because at a certain mixed review of Volunteers and Regulars he dared to say that Volunteers so organized would be of hardly any appreciable use in actual warfare. There are others: but if these, or some of these, were closeted together, they might, perhaps within a week or less, set forth the general outlines of a plan

which, at a comparatively small cost, as in Prussia, should practically make this country secure, and render us no longer a laughing stock and a prey to foreigners. If you wanted to build a house, you would not go to a sausage-maker for plans; if you required to construct a railway, you would not apply to a merchant-tailor; and if you want a system of national defence, you shouldn't ask Bobus.

It is possible that such a conference might suggest some such plan as this (details and Finance afterwards) which in the presence of a practical revolution in the art of war produced by improved locomotion, breechloaders, and other inventions, must be specially characterized by rapidity, efficiency, energy, and completeness, qualifications already old in war, but apparently new to us now. Thus, then :—

I. We require, at the least, 300,000 trained soldiers (exclusive of all volunteers and yeomanry, of whom hereafter) capable of being embodied and completely organized in a week, and moved to any point or points in three days—this to include the necessary cavalry and artillery.

The mode of raising and organising these troops must be local, by counties, each county representing a brigade or division; and by Commands, some fifteen or twenty such Command-districts contributing their proportion (say 20,000 men each), all complete in every arm and in every other equipment, commissariat stores, ambulance, tents, &c., &c.

For this purpose every Command-district must be embodied at least once a year for a week or a fortnight, and *everything so practised as though the enemy*

were in the country. Every third year at least the Command-districts should be combined into armies of 80,000 or 100,000 men, and manœuvred and practised accordingly against each other.

2. In addition to this there must be a reserve of older trained men, say from twenty-five to thirty-five years old, capable of filling up casualties, or, in the event of some huge disaster, of presenting the same numerical front to an enemy. This reserve would very largely increase in a few years, if the men embodied every year passed into it, till it might amount to half a million or more.

3. In the face of eventualities it would be well to consider whether Indian troops could be employed in this country against a foreigner ; whether 50,000 Sikhs, under British officers, could be practically used in line with British troops. For this purpose it might be well to try the experiment with two or three regiments at once ; or until our reserves were organized, with a much larger number.

4. In view of the possible destruction of our fleet and disaster to our army, a complete plan of earthwork defence must be surveyed and prepared, behind which an army might stand for six weeks, or as long as it would be required to prepare a second fleet and another army. The possible defence of every large harbour by torpedo or otherwise must be organized, and some three or four great earthwork strongholds made, or prepared to be made, at such points as shall be decided on, such as round the capital and round our chief arsenals.

5. The organization of the marine defence must be entrusted to our best practical naval man, and the new modes of warfare considered; but it must be so arranged that a second or even a third fleet can be manned, either by recalling our vessels from foreign stations, or otherwise. The subject of light unarmoured active cruisers of great speed should be discussed, and the power of arming and utilizing our Steam Mercantile Marine should form part of this subject: possibly also the state of the harbour of Heligoland.

6. *The Volunteers and Yeomanry should never be used in line or without Regulars.* If that rule be rigidly adhered to, the infantry might be valuable as skirmishers when mixed with regulars and commanded by professionals; and also behind earthworks or forts, which latter might be largely manned at first by volunteer artillery. The yeomanry may be drilled so as to do first-rate outpost service (mixed with regulars and commanded by professionals), but they should be taught to work by troops not by regiments, except for purposes of organization or marching. Their dress should be made more practical, and their equipment more complete; this also applies to the regular cavalry. They should all be able to move at the rate of forty miles a day, without baggage, on occasion, if required.

The report might go further to describe how the expenses and the levying of the men might be made practicable and easy: tolerable to the taxpayer, attrac-

tive to the men, and advantageous to the whole community. For, according to Mr. Cardwell's return, there are at present in Great Britain over 100,000 regular troops. If each of these infantry regiments were appropriated to a county, or division of a county, as most of them nominally are ; and if to each of these were added the militia of such county, *with a second battalion to be raised*, we should have the number 300,000 or thereabouts, really raisable and recruited. If, taking as many men as would volunteer from the militia (and raising the rest, if required) 50,000 or 100,000 men *were permanently embodied for one year* at a time, we should in two or four years respectively have passed 200,000 through the military mill. The 100,000 a year would be preferable if it did not too much disturb the labour market. By enlisting these men to serve with the colours *one year* and to be liable for five or ten years as first and second reserve, to be called out in case of war ; also by systematically embodying and really practising them every year for a fortnight, we should presently have an army of 300,000 *trained men* capable of being put into line in ten days, exclusive of volunteers and yeomanry who might muster half as many more efficient for contingent service.

Then as to cost, if each man be put down at £50 per annum (£42 is the estimate, exclusive of officers and transport), this 200,000 would cost us in two or four years (at two and a-half or five millions a year) just ten millions, the interest of which, if raised by loan or terminable annuities, would not be more than

£700,000 per annum—a very tolerable burden for the security afforded. After these two or four years the numbers to be embodied might be reduced to 30,000 or 40,000 men, and the standing army proportionately reduced ; so that there would hereafter only be the expense of the annual embodiment, including pension or retainer charges, such as are in force in the naval reserve ; and also the interest of the debt.

Then as to Purchase, we recommend you (the report might further say) to mind what you are doing, and *to obtain some substitute* before you lop down this enormous branch of a system. Meanwhile, get to know what you can about Frederick the Great and one Scharnhorst, Marlborough, Wellington, and other practical generals. Remember what is the condition as regards purchase of some of the so-called non-purchase Indian regiments (the 101st and 102nd, and others), and consider whether, in a country like this, you can altogether dispense with the influence, use or misuse, of wealth, such as you see in sundry adjutancies of militia, yeomanry, and volunteers. Just consider also some of the scandals and practical difficulties that have occurred (not altogether unknown at the War Office) in certain militia and volunteer non-purchase corps, where it is said that half a company have sometimes resigned rather than be commanded by some non-purchase officer ; or in the militia, where it is said half the officers have talked of resigning sooner than be associated with some non-purchase officer. When you have pondered these things, and found a full, sufficient, and satisfactory

substitute, *the Purchase system should be extinguished by a loan.* It is hardly fair to charge the taxpayers of a few years for a costly experiment that is to upset a system of two hundred years' standing. The interest on this six or eight millions (computed as necessary) would not, as terminable annuities, amount to more than £500,000 a year. Then guns are required to the amount of £500,000, according to the Government, *calculated to extend over three years!* (Think of that, Marlborough, Wellington, and Moltke, we are to be ready for the "Pickelhaube" in three years! Besides which, Mr. Cardwell has promised us a reserve of actually 60,000 men in *twelve years!*!) Then there will be torpedoes to procure, and munitions of war, and the stores to replace that *you have*, it is whispered, *squandered to make a fictitious balance-sheet.* How much do you reckon that, Bobus? Here is a sort of rough calculation, at least:—

Interest on ten millions (terminable annuities) required for embodiment and formation of a reserve	£700,000
Interest on seven or eight millions for extinction of Purchase (terminable annuities), say	500,000
Guns required (to purchase <i>at once</i>)	500,000
Torpedoes, and replacement of stores, &c., say, one million (?)—interest on same as above	70,000
Yearly cost of reserve, by way of pensions, retainers, and a fortnight's em-	

bodiment of 250,000 men (from which	
may be subtracted present cost of	
militia), say	500,000

£2,270,000

But this is just about the sum at present going in discharge of the terminable annuities, which Mr. Gladstone once pointed out might at any time be diverted, if necessary, for some great occasion. Therefore some such scheme might be carried out without the addition of any further taxation, if the *country and the House of Commons are of opinion that the great occasion has already arisen.*

This is but a meagre outline of what such a report might be; but to it might be added another consideration which might go far to compensate any disturbance in the labour market, or any expense incurred under it. It is this:—

English statesmen are at this moment considering a mighty question called Pauperism; some few have even got to a further point, namely Pauperization, which is a mightier question still. By education, by organization, by voluntary and individual efforts, too complicated to enter into here, an endeavour is being made to “cut off the main,” that is to stop the supply of paupers from that class not quite identified with the “Proletariat,” but living in half idleness, in vagrancy, in casual wards and elsewhere. Any one conversant with human nature and the lower orders, any one who has studied practically the annals of

vagrancy and crime, must be aware that to a vast number of young men between the ages of seventeen and twenty, a spirit of independence, unsettlement, roving, vagrancy, call it what you will, comes almost irresistibly. Some return to industrial life, more go to swell that great proletariat and dangerous class, the problem of statesmen and the despair of philanthropists.

Now if these, or some of these, could be regimented and industrialized by discipline and work, on some such huge system as has been here put forth, the hands of those engaged in the struggle with Pauperization and Vagrancy would be visibly strengthened, and a vast blessing would be conferred upon a dangerous and pitiful, but to some extent irresponsible host, for whose present condition society is in part blameable.

The earthworks that might have to be immediately constructed would furnish work for the recruits, as well as for those not enlisted, and if payment were made for work and employment encouraged throughout the army, as has been urged repeatedly in the House of Commons by Mr. Tracy, and again and again approved by Committees and Commissions, the army might in time become a vast national university or training school, where every man would be compelled to learn not only reading and writing, but industrial work, which is of even more necessity. It is not probable that there would be any unwillingness to engage upon these conditions ; for the recruit would not be severed from his associates, nor even

of necessity removed from his county. But under strict surveillance, he would, in some cases, for the first time learn to feel and understand the dignity of labour and the need of discipline. What a revolution in the status of officers and men it would come to be, if, instead of a huge sink of idleness, dissipation and uselessness, the army were to become one great industrial school, a national university, an atmosphere of efficiency and work, and the country were delivered once and for ever, from the disgrace of panic, and the no longer imaginary danger of national extinction!

But if, on the other hand, the money-bags of Bobus are to outweigh the intelligence of the nation, and the opinions of the best military men are to be shelved, disregarded, and disbelieved, the only rejoinder left for them as men of common sense and dignity would be this: "If you are determined to be a mere workshop, dominated by shopkeepers, all we can further advise is, that you send over the water there to some German contractor, who has made this thing, War, a study and a business—some Von Roon or Von Moltke, and contract with him to do the defence of this country at so much per yard, or per man, or per pound, as you may think will be your best mode of bargain;—we, as Englishmen and Officers, wash our hands of you altogether!"





